



Freeway work still inching along

State inconveniencing Tempe residents, others, Hallman complains

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The Arizona Republic

Feb. 15, 2007 12:00 AM

Tempe officials say they are tired of their freeway improvement projects moving slower than rush hour traffic on the Broadway curve.

They say a lack of timely improvements by the state has greatly inconvenienced Tempe residents and many others who frequently drive through the city.

Widening plans for the Broadway curve, U.S. 60 and Arizona 143 connections to Interstate 10 to resolve current traffic bottlenecks and increased traffic are needed now, Mayor Hugh Hallman said.

"The Southeast Valley and south Valley have all been badly served because that project has not been undertaken and now has been delayed by many years," Hallman said.

The construction project to widen the U.S. 60 connection to I-10 was scheduled to begin this year, Hallman said, but its start date is now uncertain.

ADOT proposed a 24-lane concept for I-10 from U.S. 60 to Interstate 17. But the \$1.3 billion anticipated price tag is more than double what's available for the project - \$550 million - according to city staff documents.

I-10 as it exists offers limited access to Tempe from Elliot Road to University Drive, staff documents state.

"If there are certain items that we were promised a long time ago that haven't been accomplished, then we need to look at those first," said Shana Ellis, chairwoman of the council's transportation/affordable housing subcommittee. "We have an obligation to the citizens of Tempe to make sure that they are carried out."

Hallman said since certain projects haven't been completely done, some problems have gotten worse, specifically the widening of U.S. 60, but not enhancing the ramps.

"More cars have been left to sit idling and in congestion because those improvements have not been complete," he said. "The traffic that's congested needs to be more effectively moved onto the I-10, and the Broadway curve needs to be straightened out."

City staff is scheduled to update the City Council on ADOT's proposed improvements for I-10 at its meeting tonight. Possible solutions will be discussed.

A possible commuter rail program and moving forward with the construction of the South Mountain Loop 202 also will be discussed.

"One of the options that folks living far south of the current metropolitan area have is commuter rail," Hallman said. "It would potentially partner with the Union Pacific rail line that already exists. That could then allow us to transport large numbers of people who would be stuck in single passenger vehicles."

The council will take comments and questions from the public at the meeting.